

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

INFO ALL EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

NHA TRANG 0852-0855

JEC PARIS 1114-1117

USSAG NAKHON PHANOM

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

COGARD POLAD

XMT AMEMBASSY SUVA

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COGARD FOR POLAD

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR, XC, US

SUBJ: FEBRUARY 19 EA PRESS SUMMARY

INDOCHINA

QM GVN ANNOUNCES FORMATION OF NEW "COMPACT" CABINET

WITH FEWER MINISTRIES, FEW NEW FACES, NO THIEU OPPONENTS

(UPI, BALTO. N-A 2/18; CHITRIB). CLARITY (NYT) QUOTES

GVN THAT EFFICIENCY IS AIM OF CHANGE, BUT WESTERN

DIPLOMATS AND SOME VIET OBSERVERS SAY CHANGES SEEM

COSMETIC AND UNLIKELY TO RESULT IN NEW APPROACHES

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TO PROBLEMS OF INFLATION, CORRUPTION AND C-F IMPLEMENTA-

TION. ALL BUT TWO OF OLD 24-MEMBER CABINET RESIGNED SATURDAY, BUT ONLY FIVE DROPPED, AND FOUR NEW MINISTERS NAMED. KHIEM REMAINS PREMIER, WITH CONTROL OF DEFENSE MINISTRY. SOME OLD MINISTRIES BEING PLACED UNDER OTHER MINISTRIES, BUT NONE OF CHANGES "STARTLES" ANALYSTS, AND NEW GOVT- DOES NOT SEEM TO SIGNAL SIGNIFICANT POLICY CHANGES. THIEU COUSIN AND CLOSE ADVISER NHA, FORMER COMMISSIONER GENERAL OF INFORMATION, IS NEW INFO MINISTER WITH ADDED RESPONSIBILITY FOR "CHOU HUI" PROGRAM. CLARITY COMMENTS THAT NHA IS CAREFULLY WATCHED BY POLITICIANS AND STUDENTS OF VN AFFAIRS, AND WHILE THE RECENT CHANGE DEPRIVES HIM OF HIS FORMER INDEPENDENCE OF PREMIER, OVERALL IT SEEMS TO GIVE HIM A

SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT IN POSITION. NHA CHARACTERIZES NEW GOVT. AS "VERY COMPACT, VERY INTEGRATED", WITH CHANGE MOTIVATED BY INCREASING PROBLEMS AND NOT BY MISMANAGEMENT OF FORMER CABINET. NHA ADDS THAT EFFORTS TO INCREASE GVN MANAGEMENT EFFICIENCY GO BACK SEVERAL MONTHS BUT IT WOULD BE "SOME TIME BEFORE WE GET RESULTS". (ABRIDGED IN SUN). WP SEES DROPPING OF PLANNING MINISTER NGOC AS EFFORT TO PIN BLAME ON HIM FOR ECON DETERIORATION AND MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN NEW CABINET.

2. "INFORMED" SAIGON SOURCES REPORT THAT ABOUT 30 GVN SOLDIERS WERE PUT ASHORE ON FIFTH SPRATLY ISLAND WITHOUT OPPOSITION (AP SUN, NYDN).

3. AP SAIGON SAYS GVN OFFICIALS RECENTLY ADMITTED THAT LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND LANDOWNERS PAY ARVN TO TERRORIZE REFUGEES AND DRIVE THEM FROM SITES WANTED BY LAND SPECULATORS. OFFICIALS' COMMENTS CAME AFTER SOLDIERS ON "LAND-GRABBING" RAID IN LONG KHANH PROVINCE KILLED ONE AND WOUNDED SEVERAL. MINISTRY OF SOCIAL WELFARE ORDERED INVESTIGATION, DEMANDED THAT LOCAL OFFICIALS GUARANTEE REFUGEE SAFETY; MINISTRY OF ECONOMY ORDERED COMPENSATION PAID FOR SLAYING. GVN OFFICIAL, WHO ASKED NOT TO BE IDENTIFIED, SAYS SUCH ACTS SOMETIMES DONE BY CORRUPT MILITARY COMMANDERS, BY REGIONAL TYCOONS, BY SOMEONE WHO "HATES BUDDHISTS", UNCLASSIFIED

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OR OCCASIONALLY BY LANDOWNER WHO SELLS LAND TO GVN FOR RESETTLEMENT AND THEN WANTS IT BACK AFTER IMPROVEMENTS MADE AND SECURITY IMPROVED. OFFICIAL SAYS REFUGEES HAVE BEEN FORCED OUT BEFORE, BUT LONG KHANH INCIDENT MARKS FIRST USE OF FIREARMS FOR PURPOSE (CSM).

4. MARKHAM (NYT) IN SEPARATE STORY, TELLS OF DEPARTURE

FROM VC AREA IN BINH DINH PROVINCE WHERE SVN CURRENCY CIRCULATES, SINCE SEPARATE VC MONEY "WOULD NOT BE IN INTEREST RECONCILIATION", AND ARVN SOLDIERS ARE BRIBED SO GOODS ARE PLENTIFUL IN MARKETS. MARKHAM ESCORTED THROUGH GVN LINES AT NIGHT, PAST AREA SHELLED REGULARLY AS "PRECAUTION". MARKHAM AND COMPANION HID IN GVN AREA FOR REST OF NIGHT, PICKED UP BY SVN MILITIAMEN AT DAWN AND BROUGHT TO DISTRICT CHIEF WHO PUT THEM ON BUS FOR NHA TRANG. BUT POLICE ARRESTED THEM AT NEXT DISTRICT TOWN AND TOOK THEM TO QUI NHON FOR INTERROGATION. AFTERWARD TWO US EMBASSY "PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATIVES" SHOW UP WITH

GVN PROVINCE CHIEF, ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT OTHER SIDE, ESPECIALLY ECON BLOCKADE. PROV. CHIEF, RESPONSIBLE FOR ECON BLOCKADE, CONCERNED AT REPORTS OF PLENTIFUL FOOD IN VC ZONE, "LOOKS RELIEVED" WHEN TOLD NO ICE ON OTHER SIDE.

5. PP PORT AUTHORITIES SAY REBELS ATTACK 10-VESSEL MEKONG CONVOY 25 MILES SE OF CAPITAL IN FIRST HEAVY RIVER AMBUSH OF DRY SEASON, BLOW UP AMMO BARGE (AP WP, NYDN, SUN; CHITRIB). FIELD REPORTS SAY FANK DROVE REBELS FROM PAGODA NINE MILES NW OF PP, TRYING TO TRAP 1200 REBELS IN AREA (AP WP, NYDN, SUN). FIELD REPORTS SAY GKR TROOPS TRY TO CROSS PREK THNOT RIVER SOUTH OF PP TO CLEAR ENEMY ARTILLERY FROM AREA, DRIVEN BACK BY MG FIRE (AP WP, SUN).

6. NYT FROM PP QUOTES "AUTHORITATIVE" MILITARY SOURCES THAT US OFFICIALS PRESS FANK TO PROVIDE MORE AIR COVER TO PREVENT ARTILLERY ATTACKS ON PP. SOURCES SAY US EMBASSY "VOCIFEROUS" ON SUBJECT AFTER RECENT UNCLASSIFIED

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BOMBARDMENT KILLED ALMOST 200. AS RESULT, KAF INCREASING COVER, SURVEILLANCE FLIGHTS. US DISSATISFACTION WITH KAF "HAS GROWN WITH THE STEPPING-UP OF THE REBELS' TERROR SHELLING OF PP" SINCE EMBASSY BELIEVES KAF NOT "VIGOROUS ENOUGH" IN TRYING TO DISCOVER, DESTROY ROCKET AND ARTILLERY SITES (CHITRIB).

CHINA

7. HUNGARIAN NEWSPAPER "MAGYAR HIRLAP" SEES CHOU EN-LAI AS POSSIBLE TARGET OF CURRENT PRC IDEOLOGICAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST CONFUCIUS AND LIN PIAO; SAYS DRIVE WAS LAUNCHED "TO DISGUISE PERSONAL DIFFERENCES " BETWEEN CHOU AND CHIANG CHING (AP WP, NYDN).

8. FRENCH SOURCE REPORTS THREE CONTRACTS TOTALING 120 MILLION DOLS, CALLING FOR SUPPLY OF SIX CHEMICAL UNITS TO PRC, HAVE BEEN SIGNED IN PEKING BETWEEN HEURTEY-INDUSTRIE AND "A CHINESE CORPORATION" (WP).

9. AFP TAIPEI REPORTS "TAIWAN" PLANS TO BUILD MORE MAGNIFICENT CONFUCIAN TEMPLE WITH 3000-SEAT HALL TO COUNTER PEKING'S PRESENT ANTI-CONFUCIUS CAMPAIGN (WP).

10. HSIO MIN FENG, COLUMBIA U. LECTURER AND FORMER CNA CORRESPONDENT, KILLED BY SUBWAY TRAIN MONDAY IN WHAT POLICE THEORIZE WAS SUICIDE (NYT).

„ GRC DECIDES TO CUT BY ONE-HALF FOR ONE YEAR IMPORT
11. GRC DECIDES TO CUT BY ONE-HALF FOR ONE YEAR IMPORT TAXES ON 19 INDUSTRIAL ITEMS, BASED ON INTERNATIONAL PRICE INCREASES FOR THREE COMMODITIES (WHICH INCLUDED SULPHUR, PHOSPHOROUS AND RAW STEEL MATERIALS FOR CONSTRUCTION)(AP, NYT).

JAPAN

12. EEC PRES. ORTOLI BEGINS WEEK-LONG TOKYO VISIT, DURING WHICH HE WILL NEGOTIATE SETTING UP OF EE
E E E E E E E

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